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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present a developed, methodological approach for the study of cable television stations affiliated with higher education institutions, and also to present significant findings detailing the operational problems of higher education-affiliated cable television stations. Based on a literature search which identified over 100 variables, four critical areas of concern for higher education-affiliated cable television stations were selected: organization; budget; personnel; and equipment. A questionnaire which addressed these areas was administered via telephone to 92 directors or chief executives of college- and university-affiliated cable stations. Data analysis of 87 completed interviews identified the following trends and problems: (1) inadequate equipment and personnel funding by most colleges and universities; (2) lack of financial commitment from cable companies; (3) lack of sufficient release time for station directors; (4) dependence upon student assistants; (5) inadequate professional development opportunities; (6) overutilization and insufficient stock of equipment; (7) lack of adequate physical plant; and (8) little or no strategic planning for equipment update. A list of references and sample questionnaire complete the document. (JB)

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A METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION AFFILIATED CABLE TELEVISION STATIONS

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A METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION AFFILIATED CABLE TELEVISION STATIONS

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is two fold. First, to present a developed methodological approach for the study of cable television stations affiliated with higher education institutions; and second, to present the signficant findings detailing the operational problems of higher education affiliated cable television stations.

The paper will highlight an extensive literature search and a resulting conceptual framework utilized throughout the investigation. The literature search helped identify over 100 variables. The conceptual framework developed identified and clustered critical issues of concern on the operations of cable television stations. Variables were clustered under the four primary areas of interest: (1) organization; (2) budget; (3) personnel; and (4) equipment.

A constructed questionnaire which addressed this conceptual framework provided the guided protocol used during the 20 to 30 minute telephone interviews. Ninety-two directors or chief executives of higher education affiliated cable stations were surveyed.

Internal and external validity of the questionnaire was controlled in part by extensive pre-study screening by professional reviewers. Subsequent instrument revisions allowed for a majority of questions to be presented as a statement to which a reaction along a value-continuum scale would be offered. The instrument also provided the opportunity for open-ended statements which were analyzed post-hoc given perceived patterns.

The investigators will identify strategies and techniques utilized in the development of the questionnaire protocol. The consuming telephone survey method will be discussed in terms of results and impact not readily attainable through other research methods.

Discussion of the research findings will focus upon the four major areas of interest. Data summaries will be presented concentrating on the most signficant problems identified.

A METHODOLOGY IN STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION AFFILIATED CABLE TELEVISION STATIONS

Background

For the past 40 years, television has been primarily a broadcasting medium. Signals were transmitted from antennas located on towers and picked up by home antennas. This system limits the amount of channels that can be broadcast due to overlapping and interference.

However, cable television has the potential to end the scarcity of channels. Many existing cable systems carry 20 television channels and some up to 40 (Williamns, 1982). Fiber optics developed at Bell Research Labs make possible a greatly increased channel capacity, numbering into the thousands of channels (Bittner, 1981). Further cable growth has been fostered by the elimination of some FCC regulations in 1978 by the courts (Levenson, 1980).

Many colleges and universities have television studios and often they are affiliated with local cable systems. These studios have several purposes with the most important being the instruction and training of students. However, many of these studios also provide public access for the community to the local cable company's channels. A study is needed to determine what problems these studios are having in accomplishing their mission. Such a study would be a help in providing an understanding of the services available and assisting other colleges to examine the option in television and education.

Purpose

This study will focus on examining college and university affiliated cable television stations and the identification of their operational problems.

The purpose of this study is to present data on problems and concerns that a college should consider before starting a cable affiliated station.

There are four research questions that will be examined by the study. These questions will center around four areas: organization; budget; personnel; and, equipment. The four research questions to be answered are:

1. What organizational concerns can be identified in college and university cable affiliated stations?

2. What budget concerns can be identified in college/university cable affiliated stations?

3. What personnel concerns can be identified in college and university concerns affiliated stations?

4. What equipment concerns can be identified in college/university cable affiliated stations?

Methodology

Content Analysis

The purpose of this study was to gather data on the operational problems of

college and university affiliated cable television stations. Survey research was utilized to gather the information as Babbie (1973) stated that survey research is useful in discovering the distribution of certain traits or attributes. A descriptive survey was used, which according to Isaac and Micheal (1979), will collect data systematically to describe a situation or area of interest factually and accurately.

The method for data collection was telephone interviews. This method of collecting data was chosen due to very poor response rate to the initial pilot mailing. Out of 20 questionnaires distributed as a pilot test, only four were returned. An alternative method of collecting data, telephone interviews, was therefore selected.

The total identifiable population was 92 directors. These facilities were identified from two sources: TV Guide Almanac; and the Journalism Directory 1983.

The following professional organizations were also contacted in an unsuccessful effort to identify more facilities; Alpha Epsilon Rho; the Association of Educational Communications and Technology; the Broadcast Education Association; and the National Cable Television Association.

It was also felt that the highest response rate would be obtained by telephone interviews. This proved correct as 87 of the 92 directors that were in charge of facilities were interviewed. Thus, the response rate was 94.5%. Participation was further encouraged in the promise that results would be sent to each director.

Procedures

Eighty-seven of the 92 directors of higher education affiliated cable stations across the United States were interviewed. Telephone interviews ensured that the correct person answered the questions and provided an opportunity of immediate clarification. Station listings in TV Guide Almanac and the Journalism Directory 1983 were useful in identifying facilities but contained may errors when identifying the appropriate director. Some facilities had temporary or revolving directors making it more difficult to identify who was in charge at the present time. The secretary that answered the telephone was always able to give accurately and quickly the director's name. Often several telephone calls were necessary to establsh an appointment to do the interview.

The interviews were conducted during the months of November and December of 1984. Each interview took an average of 20 minutes with a few taking as long as a half hour.

The interview took the following format. First, the interviewer would give some background information on the project and the purpose of the research. Secondly, the interviewer would explain the questionnaire and its format. This would take one or two minutes after which the interviewer would proceed through the questionnaire one question at a time until all the questions were completed. All directors were encouraged to volunteer infromation that was not covered by the questions. Few took the opportunity to provide any additional comments as most seemed to believe that the answer choices provided by the questionnaire were satisfactory as to scope.

Instrument Development

Before constructing the questionnaire, informational interviews and discussions with various professionals associated with the cable television industry and higher education were held. These discussions led to the

development of a preliminary questionnaire that was validated by a team of experts. The validators were each sent a draft of a questionnaire and were asked to respond to any inconsistencies or ommissions. There were also follow-up interviews with the validators that focused on criticisms of the instrument in order to more fully redefine the questionnaire.

The validatiors were chosen carefully in order to provide input that was not only broad in scope but also specialized. All validators had a broad background in television, higher education and were able to bring unique talents that were neeeded to develop the questionnaire, The validatiors were also used as a pilot test. This was helpful in perfecting the interview technique before the other directors were interviewed.

Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire is divided into two parts; a copy of the complete questionnaire is provided in the Appendix. The first part helps identify some demographic information about the cable station. The second part requests specific information concerning the station and related problems based upon the primary research questions.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from 87 completed interviews were coded and entered into the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program housed in the Honeywell level 66 computer at the Indiana University of Pennsylvainia. There were 106 questions with 15,322 data points for this research project.

Several types of statistical data were obtained upon analysis. There were frequency counts for all answers, adjusted for missing data. Occassionally there were questions that the directors were unable or unwilling to answer, resulting in missing data.

Exploratory analysis of data revealed trends, identified problems, and exposed areas of further research.

Highlighted Findings

This investigation examined data obtained form telephone interviews to 87 higher education affiliated cable television stations. The comprehencsive study focused upon the primary areas of interest: I. Organization; II. Budget; III. Personnel; and, IV. Equipment.

The following outlined summary of the major findings is not presented in rank order; rather, highlighted issues or statements are provided within these primary areas of interest.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS/STATEMENTS

a. The data indicates a consistent finding of inadequate funding by most colleges and universities. The areas of equipment and personnel were most typically cited.
b. Most local cable companies do not intervene in the day to day operations of the station.
c. Most affiliated stations do share the provided cable channel with another prgramming source. The affiliated station is the sole source of programming for a provided channel.
d. Stations which have advisory boards perceive those boards as being

inactive or having a low level of activity. Related to this finding, most station directors do not recognize a need for a more active board.
e. Most station directors believe that providing or doing public access programming benefits the overall operation of the cable station.

II. BUDGET PROBLEMS/STATEMENTS

a. Higher education administrators want and demand that the station provide more services than the administration is willing or able to provide budgetary support for.
b. Linkages with other cable systems, for programming acquisitions or for program delivery, were not evident. Related to this finding, there appears to be a limited return on investment.
c. Overwhelmingly, there does not seem to be a financial commitment from the cable company.

III. PERSONNEL PROBLEMS/STATEMENTS

a. Most station director's time is divided among other institutional responsibilities apart form direct station management. Related to this, most director's perceive that they are not given sufficient release time for station duties.
b. Most stations are highly dependent upon student assistants. Given a predominantly student work force, programming and general studio work/tasks are not preformed in a timely or professionally consistant manner.
c. There appears to be inadequate, ongoing, professional development for station directors.

IV. EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS/STATEMENTS

a. The data revealed that there is a consistent pattern of overutilization of equipment and a general feeling of insufficient stock of equipment. This is especially evident given the numbers of students involved at most stations.
b. A consistent finding was the statement by station directors of the inadequacy of their current physical plant. This was particularly emphasized given the rapid growth of programmatic needs and advancements in technology.
c. Current equipment or projected patterns of equipment purchasing is perceived to be below desired levels of quantity and particularly quality.
d. There appears to be little or no strategic planning for equipment update. In most cases equipment must be expensively maintained beyond its useful service life.

In summary, the findings indicate specific problems and issues which most higher education affiliated cable television stations must deal with. These problems and issues appear consistent across different sponsoring institutions and across station structure or size.

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A PROFILE ON CURRENT PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CABLE AFFILIATED TELEVISION STATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data on the status and problems of college and university affiliated cable television stations.

WHO SHOULD BE COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE?

The Director, Coordinator, or day-to-day administrator of the cable station. By cable station we mean a facility that provides cablecasting to the college or university and the community.

FORMAT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is broken into two parts. The first part helps identify some general demographic information about the cable station. The second part requests some specific information concerning the station and related problems. It also contains an opportunity for sharing some specifics not highlighted within this questionnaire.

It would be most beneficial if you answer all the questions and statements as best you can. You should proceed through the questionnaire in order from beginning to end. The questionnaire has been designed to not only solicit information from you, but also to provide a common base of knowledge and sharing as you work through the questionnaire.

SURVEY PARTICIPATION AND SHARING OF RESULTS

As part of the study, the principal investigator is willing to provide you a summary copy of the results should you desire to receive a copy.

Do you wish to receive a copy of the results (check)? _____Yes_____No

If yes, please print or type this identification information-

Name: _____ _____ _____ _____
(Dr|Mr|Ms) (First) (M.I.) (Last)

Title:_____

Contact _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ _____ _____
(City) (State) (Zip code)

Office Phone: (_____) -_____

PART I - GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1.Complete name of college or university:_____

2.Please check which is applicable about your institution: _____ private _____ public

3.Overall enrollment (estimated): _____undergraduate _____graduate

Does your institution have continuing education (check):_____Yes_____No

If yes: What is the appproximate enrollment_____

4.Setting or location characteristics of the institution. Check one-

_____urban (within the city limits of a major metropolitian center, 50,000 people)

_____suburban (within one hour driving distance of a major metropolitian center)

_____rural (having no major metropolitian centers within a one hour driving distance)

5.Fill-in the requested information:

The year cable station was founded:_____

The year station became affiliated with a cable company:_____

Is your station programming part of the basic cable fee (check & answer)-

_____Yes_____No

If yes, what is the total monthy fee paid by subscribers. $_____

If no, what is the base monthy fee $_____

and what is the additional fee for your station's programming. $_____

6.What is the number of cable subscribers that

-can receive your stations programming (potential):_____

-are receiving your stations programming (actual):_____

7.Check one of the appropriate statements on channel reception:

_____Your station is received on one of the first 12 primary channels.

_____Your station is received on a channel number greater than 13.

8.List the professional organizations or associations that the television staff and or the station are members of:

	Please check: Individual	Station
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

PART II - ASSESSMENT OF: ORGANIZATION, BUDGET, PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT

ORGANIZATION, BUDGET, PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT

Section (A) - Description of the organization.

1.What is the mission of the station. Please indicate an estimated percentage given the below list of probable station missions; space has been permitted should additional missions need to be added.

_____% Instruction of students in cable technology

_____% Delivery of educational programming in support of institutional offerings

_____% Marketing or public relations for the institution

_____% Delivery of programming in support of community affairs

_____% Other:_____

_____% Other:_____

100 % Total

2.Please check any of the below areas which describe the type of instructional programming you may air.

_____offering of telecourses

_____development of supplemental student materials with your programming

_____offering of tutorial or remedial programming

_____capacity for live coverage, such as quest speakers or special events

_____enrichment programming, such as cultural events

_____other:_____

_____other:_____

3.Below is a list of problem areas in instructional programming. Circle your feelings as to the significance of these problems given your station. Add any comments for clarification of your responses (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 lack of or no faculty support
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 lack of or no administrative support
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 lack of or no community support
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 inability to do cable instructional programming due to unions
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate funding for production of instructional programming
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

4.Which best describes the the reporting relationship of the station (please check one).

_____The station is dependent upon an academic unit of the institution.
_____The station is attached to an academic unit but also has a wider institutional mission than classroom use alone.
_____The station is an administrative unit of the institution.
_____Other:_____

5.Do you perceive a reporting relationship problem? Given the items below or by listing others you may perceive, circle your feeling as to the significance of these problems given your particular station. Add any comments for clarification of your responses (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 Is it clear who assigns tasks?
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Does the source of funding conflict with day to day workload?
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Is the chain of command clear?
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

0 1 2 3 4 5 Other:_____
specify:

6.Below is a list of relationship areas with the cable company. Circle your feeling as to the significance of these problems given your particular station. Add any comments for clarification of your responses (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 quality control of programming:
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 upgrading of equipment
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 censoring of programming
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 specification on amount of programming hours
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 specification on times of scheduling
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:

7.There are several issues regarding public access. By public access we mean the public ability or right to use the cable system to transmit programming (usually for a fee).

Do you provide public access._____Yes_____No

8.Below is a list of problem areas that deal with public access. Circle your feeling as to the significance of these problems given your particular station. Add any comments for clarification of your responses (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 conflict of interest between the institution and cable company
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 unprepared clients or users
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 overuse of facilities
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:

Section (B) - Discussion of the critical issues of the organization.

Respondent Generated:
From the above description items on organization and the issues generated by the investigator, what other issues do you feel are significant given organizational considerations (optional).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ORGANIZATION, BUDGET, PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT

Section (A) - Description of the budget.

1.What is the station's estimated total operating budget in a given fiscal year (12 months): $_____

2.Given this total budget, indicate the percentage from each of the categories below, the source of these funds.

_____% General College/University operating funds
_____% General academic department operating funds
_____% Special student fees
_____% Outside user fees including grants and or contracts
_____% Endowment or alumni contributions
_____% Other:_____
_____% Other:_____
100 % Total

3.Given the list below, circle your opinion on those budgetary problems which are representative of your particular station. Add clarification statements if needed (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 lack of a commitment by the administration
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 University has insufficient funds
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 station lacks a fair share of existing funds due to budgeting policies
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 budget operations are dependent upon soft monies (grant & contract)
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:

4.Does the cable company have any financial commitments to the cable station? _____Yes_____No
If yes, check any appropriate commitments-
_____staffing
_____technical support
_____equipment replacement
_____other:_____
_____other:_____
Do any of the above commitments cause difficulties? Please explain-

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Section (B) - Discussion of the critical issues of budgeting.

Respondent Generated:
From the above description items on budgeting and the issues generated by the investigator, what other issues do you feel are significant to consider under budget (optional).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ORGANIZATION, BUDGET, PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT

Section (A) - Description of personnel.

1.Could you please identify the number of FTE (Full-time equivalent; 1.0=one person working full-time for one year) which directly report to you for the following categories:

_____FTE professional staff
_____FTE graduate students
_____FTE undergraduate students
_____FTE technical support staff
_____FTE other:_____
_____FTE other:_____

Could you please identify the personnel you have access to but reports to another administrative or academic unit.

_____FTE other:_____
_____FTE other:_____
_____FTE other:_____

2.From the below list please identify the amount of input the following personnel have in long-range planning.

0=perceived as a person having no input
5=a great deal of input

0 1 2 3 4 5 advisory board
0 1 2 3 4 5 department chair or administrative head
0 1 2 3 4 5 station manager
0 1 2 3 4 5 university or college officials
0 1 2 3 4 5 cable company
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____

3.Below is a potential list of personnel problems you may be experiencing. Circle your opinion on those personnel problems which are representative of your particular station. Add clarification statements if needed (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 inactive advisory board
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate technical support
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 directors time not totally devoted to station operations
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 heavy reliance on students for daily operations
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate professional staffing
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate ongoing professional staff development
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:

Section (B) - Discussion of the critical issues of personnel.

Respondent Generated:

From the above description items on personnel and the issues generated by the investigator, what other issues do you feel are significant to consider under personnel (optional).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ORGANIZATION, BUDGET, PERSONNEL, AND EQUIPMENT

Section (A) - Description of equipment.

1.Below are simple yes/no statements to quantify and qualify your facilities. Check off the appropriate response.

_____Yes_____No -Does the station have a production studio?
_____Yes_____No -Does the station have color capability?
_____Yes_____No -Does the station have remote equipment?
_____Yes_____No -Does the station have editing capability?

2.Please fill-in or check the appropriate blanks in helping us to define your equipment.

VCRs: Quantity_____ Formats_____
Audio console: Yes_____ No_____
Film chain capablities: 16mm_____ 8mm_____ 35mm slides_____
Character generator: Pages of memory_____
Cameras: Number of studio_____ Number of remote_____
Time base corrector: Yes_____ No_____
Video switching capabilities: Yes_____ No_____

3.Given the mission of your station, identify the equipment problems that your station may have. Add clarification statements if needed (optional-specify).

0=no problem
5=a serious problem

0 1 2 3 4 5 important equipment components are missing from a desired system
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 quality of equipment is not at desirable level
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 more of existing equipment (quantity) is desirable
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 equipment is outdated
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate physical plant and facilities
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 inadequate maintenance of equipment
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:
0 1 2 3 4 5 other:_____
specify:

Section (B) - Discussion of the critical issues of equipment.

Respondent Generated:
From the above description items on equipment and the issues generated by the investigator, what other issues do you feel are significant to consider under equipment (optional).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____